

Saint Rita



Advocate of the Impossible

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(Author Unknown)

COVER ART: *Saint Rita picture acquired from <http://www.catholictradition.org>*

NOTE: *Most images of Saint Rita show her in a traditional black habit. History, however, shows that sisters in the monastery of Saint Mary Magdalene in 14th-century Cascia, Italy, wore beige or brown habits (usually with a white veil with a brown edge). The cover picture for this booklet was selected for its portrayal of Saint Rita as beautiful, loving, and devout.*

Saint Rita

Her Birth

ST RITA OF CASCIA is universally called the 'Saint of the Impossible', because her intercession has been found effectual with God in most desperate and hopeless cases. Born in Rocca Porena in the diocese of Spoleto, Italy, about the year 1381, Rita came to her parents, already advanced in age, as the answer to many years of prayer. The piety and charity of her father and mother were so well known that they were called the 'peace-makers' of their little village.

On the day after Rita's baptism, as she lay in her cradle, a swarm of pure white bees alighted on her face and went in and out of her slightly opened mouth, as if to take honey from her lips. Doubtless this was to typify the sweetness of word and manner which later was to win for God so many souls, and the comfort she was to diffuse throughout the world.

Example for Virgins

Rita's parents gave her a good home training. At an early age, she felt drawn to God, and spent many hours in the parish church. She did not care for the pastimes and sports of youth, and was free from vanity and love of fine clothes. Rita's obedience to her parents was remarkable. At a tender age, Rita began to perform bodily penances, particularly fasting. She gave alms to the poor, for whom she always showed most loving compassion. When only ten years old, she felt drawn to retirement and to a cloistered life, but love for her aged parents prevented her from making known her desires.

With her parents' permission, Rita fitted up a small oratory where she prayed and meditated. In this solitude, her love for Jesus Crucified and her compassion for his bitter sufferings daily became more ardent. However, after a year her duty of assisting her parents forced her from her loved solitude.

The desire to join a community of Augustinian nuns at Cascia was daily growing in Rita's mind. However, pious though they were, her parents were deeply grieved at the thought of this separation. Tearful pleadings and the weight of their parental authority prevailed; they even induced her to marry. Hitherto Rita had been a model of virginal purity, filial love, reverence, and obedience. She had now to follow another path, to become a bright example of virtue to all who lived in the married state.

Model for Mothers

The young man selected as Rita's husband was passionate and quick-tempered, one well suited to try the patience and virtue of a saint. Just a few days after their marriage, he began to ill-treat her. It was only her love for the Crucified One that enabled her to bear this heavy cross. Sweetness of temper was the weapon she used to combat her husband's cruelty. After many years, her virtue and long-suffering at length won her husband's heart and brought unity and love into their home.

Gradually, to her great anxiety, Rita noticed that her two sons had inherited their father's quarrelsome disposition. She spared neither vigilance, words, nor punishments to curb their self-willed dispositions. She performed penances for their welfare, and constantly offered acts of charity towards her neighbor.

Pattern for Widows

After eighteen years of married life, Rita's husband was barbarously slain a short distance from their home. Grief filled Rita's heart, particularly because of the uncertainty of his readiness to meet his Judge. Soon her trust in divine providence triumphed, and she bowed in resignation to God's design. She generously pardoned the murderers of her husband and sought pardon for them from divine mercy.

To her consternation, Rita discovered that her two sons, though young in years, were plotting vengeance against those who had murdered their father. In spite of all her advice and solicitude, the sorrowing mother could not touch her children's vengeful hearts. In her grief, she turned to God and besought him either to change her children's hearts or to take them from this world before they could accomplish the vengeance they were plotting.

Rita's prayer was answered. Within a year both sons died, and, though touched by natural sorrow, she thanked God for taking them away from the dangers of sin and the risk of eternal damnation.

Rita's life as a widow was short. During that time, she spent herself in works of charity for her neighbor, in penances, and in fasting. She lived in retirement and wore coarse mourning garments. Her former burning desire to enter the cloister now grew more vehement. She sought admission among the Augustinian nuns of Cascia, but was several times rejected. It was not their custom to receive widows.

Miraculous Entry into the Convent

One night, Saint John the Baptist, to whom Rita had been devoted from childhood, Saint Augustine, and Saint Nicholas of Tolentino appeared to Rita. They conducted her to the convent of Cascia. Bolted gates and doors opened at their touch, and they left Rita in the chapel of the Augustinian nuns. What was the surprise of the Sisters the next morning on finding the oft-repulsed widow within their enclosure! Her miraculous entry being too evident to doubt God's designs in her regard, they now accepted her unanimously.

The Perfect Religious

In her religious life, Rita excelled in the perfect observance of her Rule and the holy vows, in charity for God and her sisters, in profound humility and sacrificial labor. Love of our suffering Savior urged Rita to perform heroic penances. She possessed the spirit of prayer and contemplation in a high degree. In her cell, she devised a little mountain with a cross to remind her of our Savior's torments in his Passion. With tearful compassion, she followed our Lord, in spirit, to Calvary and to death.

Miraculous Wound

In 1443, when Rita attained her sixty-second year, God placed his seal upon her merits by a singular privilege. Once when the holy nun heard a sermon on the sufferings of our divine Savior, compassion so filled her that she went to her cell to weep bitterly before the crucifix. She besought her Beloved, crowned with thorns, to let her share his torture. Thereupon one of the thorns from the crucifix detached itself and penetrated the side of Rita's forehead. She swooned from pain. This wound festered and emitted a foul odor, making it necessary for Rita to live apart from the community. It was humiliating but she bore it with joy until death and was happy in her solitude. When Rita wished to go to Rome to gain the jubilee indulgence, the wound healed almost instantly and reopened after her return, proving its miraculous origin.

During the last five years of her life, the saint was bedridden most of the time. Once an acquaintance asked if she wished anything. "Yes," Rita answered, "go to the garden of my house, at Rocca Porena; pluck a rose there and bring it to me." It was in the month of January during the rigors of winter. Amazed, the woman went and to her utter astonishment, found a full-blown red rose amidst the frozen bushes. She hastened to bring it to Rita, who joyfully took it as coming from the hands of her divine Spouse.

Another time Rita bade a woman bring her two figs from the same garden. Actually finding two ripe figs on a leafless tree, the woman plucked them with awe and pleasure and carried them to the sick nun. The religious and the people of the vicinity, on hearing of this second wonder praised God and conceived a great veneration for the dying saint.

Three days before Rita's death, Our Lord, accompanied by the Blessed Virgin, appeared to her and promised her the joys of heaven. Rita died May 22, 1457, at the age of seventy-six, forty-four years of which had been spent in the religious life.

Miracles after Death

Crowds hastened to venerate Rita's body before its burial. The noxious wound in the forehead now shone like a brilliant jewel and exhaled a heavenly fragrance. A close relative of Rita's confidently leaned over the holy body and at once recovered the use of her arms, which had been paralyzed for many years! Many other astounding miracles were wrought before the remains were entombed. Rita was solemnly beatified on July 16, 1628.

In later years, devotion to Saint Rita increased and she has won for herself the title, Saint of the Impossible. Many instances are related of how the saint rendered aid in the last adversities. Conversions of hardened sinners and of those who had led dissolute lives are no less numerous than cures of bodily ills.

Canonization of Saint Rita

The universal devotion to Saint Rita and the many wonders wrought through her intercession enkindled in the hearts of the thousands of devotees of the humble Augustinian nun the ardent desire to see her elevated to the honors of the altar. Great was their joy when on May 24, 1990, the Decree of Canonization was published. Her feast is celebrated on May 22.

In conclusion, we quote these memorable words from the Decree, "Saint Rita of Cascia as maiden, wife, mother, and nun was so pleasing and so beloved by Jesus Christ that he deigned to signalize her not only with the seal of his love, but especially with the seal of his Passion. Saint Rita merited this great privilege because of her singular humility, her complete detachment, and her admirable penance. However, the virtues that made Saint Rita particularly pleasing to God were her love for her neighbor and her devotion to Jesus Crucified."

Devotions in Honor of Saint Rita and Novena Prayers to Saint Rita

(One or several of the following may be used as a novena.)

O holy protectress of those who are in utmost need!

Shining as a star of hope in the midst of darkness, in patience and fortitude, like the patriarch Job; scourge of devils; health of the sick; deliverer of those in extreme need; wonder of saints and model of all states!

With confident trust and firmly united to the adorable will of God, I implore thy help, through the merits of my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and in particular of that painful Crown of Thorns which thou contemplated with tender devotion.

Through the merits of the Blessed Virgin Mary and thine own graces and virtues, I implore thee heart and soul to obtain my earnest petition, if it be for the greater glory of God and my salvation (*here make your request*).

Guide and purify my intentions, O, holy protectress, and most dear advocate, that I may obtain the pardon of all my sins and the grace to persevere daily, as thou didst, in walking with courage, generosity, and unwavering fidelity upon the heavenward path on which Our Lord desires to lead me.

Amen.

Invocations to Saint Rita

Saint Rita, advocate of the impossible, pray for us.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be to the Father . . . (three times).

Prayer to Saint Rita

Holy patroness of those in need, Saint Rita, so humble, pure, and patient, whose pleadings with thy divine Spouse are irresistible, obtain for us from our Crucified Lord our request. (Mention it.) Be propitious towards us for the greater glory of God, and we promise to honor thee and to sing thy praises forever. Amen.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be to the Father . . . (three times).

Litany in Honor of Saint Rita

(For private use only.)

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, hear us.

Christ, graciously hear us.

God the Father Almighty, have mercy on us.

God the Son, Redeemer of the world, who said, "Ask, and you shall receive, seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you," have mercy on us.

God the Holy Ghost, Spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, and knowledge, have mercy on us.

Holy Trinity, one God, infinite in power, have mercy on us.

Holy Mary, who never refuses a petition, pray for us.

Immaculate virgin, Queen of heaven and earth, pray for us.

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, pray for us.

Holy Angels, spirits of humility, pray for us.

Holy Principalities, protectors of religious communities, pray for us.

Holy Virtues, angels of fortitude, pray for us.

Holy Cherubim, angels of light, pray for us.

Saint Rita, advocate of the impossible, pray for us.

Saint Rita, consecrated to God, pray for us.

Saint Rita, bride of the suffering Savior, pray for us.

Saint Rita, filled with compassion for the sufferings of Christ, pray for us.

Saint Rita, crowned by an angel with a crown of thorns, pray for us.

Saint Rita, who bore the wounds of His mysterious crown on thy forehead, pray for us.

Saint Rita, who firmly trusted in the loving mercy of Jesus, pray for us.

Saint Rita, who importuned the dying Savior with ardent supplications, pray for us.

Saint Rita, who never doubted a gracious answer to thy prayer, pray for us.

That we may renounce all self-love, Saint Rita, pray for us.

That we may confidently trust in the promise of Jesus, Saint Rita, pray for us.

That the enemies of our salvation may be put to confusion, Saint Rita, pray for us.

That we may ever perfectly fulfill the will of God, Saint Rita, pray for us.

That our inclinations to evil may be destroyed, Saint Rita, pray for us.

That the Faith in all its purity may be spread over our land, Saint Rita, pray for us.

That holy zeal may fill our hearts, Saint Rita, pray for us.

That we may infuse a holy love for chastity into all who come in contact with us, Saint Rita, pray for us.

That in all our actions and omissions we may endeavor to promote a tender charity, Saint Rita, pray for us.

That we may be delivered from all avarice, vainglory and rash judgment, Saint Rita, pray for us.

That great saints may rise in our land, who will edify the people and dispel the darkness of unbelief, Saint Rita, pray for us.

That we may be delivered from all interior enemies, Saint Rita, pray for us.

Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world, spare us, O Lord.

Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world, graciously hear us, O Lord.

Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

V. Pray for us, Saint Rita.

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray:

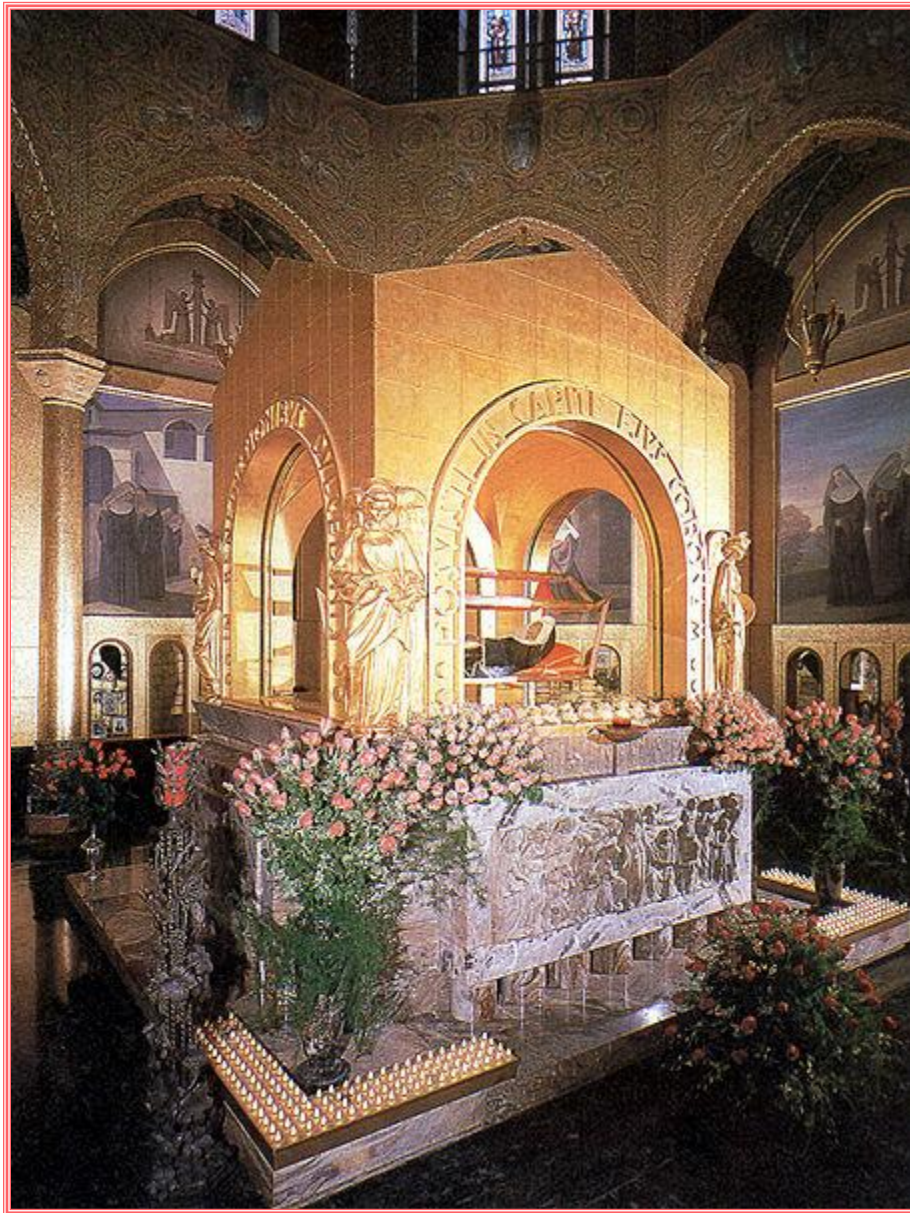
O God, who in Thine infinite tenderness deign to hearken to the prayer of Saint Rita and to grant to her supplication that which seems impossible to human foresight, skill and efforts, in reward for her compassionate love and firm reliance upon Thy promise; have pity upon our adversity and succor us in our calamities, that unbelievers may know that Thou art the recompenser of the humble, the defense of the helpless and the strength of those who trust in Thee. Through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Prayer to Saint Rita

O glorious Saint Rita, who shared in a marvelous manner the sorrowful Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, obtain for me the grace to suffer in patience the miseries of this life, and be my refuge in all my necessities. Amen.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father ... (three times).





Saint Rita's Tomb at Cascia Basilica



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